

Brethren Evangelist

"I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life."—Jesus

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Editorial

The Testimony of Numbers

There is a significant lesson in the Lord's severe dealing with David because he numbered Israel. There was something more in David's conduct than a mere literal transgression. In dealing with Old Testament history we must never forget its inlaid symbolism. Two great principles in human conduct stand opposed to each other; on the one hand the tendency to lean upon an arm of flesh, and on the other the duty to lean upon God alone. The latter involves man's highest interests, and all the ultimate blessings which infinite love has provided for him. The former involves no other possibilities but defeat and ruin. All the lessons of the dispensations and all the dealings of providence have for their end the inculcation of that practical faith which is best expressed by trusting in God, resting upon his strength, confiding in his love, leaning upon his arm. Of all others David should have been the last to lean upon mere numbers, to glorify the arm of flesh, to boast of his numerous armies, to congratulate himself upon a populous nation. He who had walked so triumphantly by faith must now commence to walk by sight. For his own sake, but more for the sake of the ages to follow, and for the coming generations, the Lord with sharpest reproof and severest discipline brings him back to the way of wisdom and truth.

Sometimes we hear the representatives of a strong denomination boast of its puny million; and as frequently are the members of a small communion scornfully reminded of their insignificant numbers. All such boasting is vain. One would think that a company claiming to have the truth would be ashamed to boast of millions fewer than the vast populations of the unsaved. Yet if they have one in a thousand it goes into the loud blast of the laudatory trumpet. It would seem also that history would cause them to hesitate before predicating the superiority of their position, or of their doctrine, upon the number of its adherents. The testimony of majorities has been far more adverse to truth and righteousness than in favor of it. Even now if Christianity were left to a vote, it would be immediately expelled from the world. The small minority in its favor would excite the laughter of the nations. It is the "little flock" which shall inherit the kingdom. Those who desire to accomplish the unnatural union of truth and popularity will possibly be drawn to the larger denominations, but those who are willing to be unpopular for the sake of truth, may find themselves for the present few in numbers,—for the present, for possibly there is a wider world somewhere, in which virtue, and obedience, and humility, and purity, will no longer suffer the reproach of singularity.

The Universal Paradox

Seeing eyes that do not see, hearing ears that do not hear, sentient hearts that do not understand; this was the Lord's plaint concerning the multitudes around him who gaped upon the wonders of his power, or heard his discourse of inimitable wisdom. Are we not like them? How many of us have eyes to see the wonderful things all around us, the visions of beauty and glory in earth and sky, the hand of the Lord here, there and everywhere; the infinities and the splendors above and beneath us. How dull also our visual receptivity in spiritual things, the footprints of God in this and that providence, his controlling hand upon the lash of turbulent nations, the bridle of his will in the mouths of statesmen and warriors, the "all things" working together for ultimate righteousness and the good of his people. Celestial harmonies are also resounding thru earth and sky, but we do not hear them. Sons of God and morning stars discourse sublime anthems in vain for the heavy ear drums of stolid indifference, or unconsciousness. So much of our clod kinship is in us that we do not hear. The sweet music of truth, or love, or sympathy, or peace, flows on around us and above us, but we heed it not. Sealed also are the magnificent realms of thought to unreceptive intellects, and the realms of truth and love to petrified hearts. Thus in the midst of an ocean of life,—life in all its manifestations of power and beauty, and harmony,—we are dead; unreceptive, or but a little receptive here and there, admitting a single quavering note where a symphony resounds, a single feeble ray where an ocean of glory rolls, seeing but a dim and doubtful vision where an army of angels march. Arduous is the task of teachers and pastors to widen and deepen the receptivity of the mind and soul for all higher and better things, to unbar the windows and unlock the doors of this gross nature of ours, and let in God's beatitudes and infinities. Patient Love, laden with unspeakable blessings, speaks to pastor and people, Ephphatha. Be opened, O dull ears and dim eyes.

Ashland College Endowment

Last week we received a letter from a good sister in Kansas making request for an endowment pledge. This adds another \$100 to the endowment of Ashland College. What we need and what we must have to meet the present demands is \$25,000 endowment, about \$16,000 of which is already secured, leaving \$9,000 to be raised. We have received a number of very encouraging letters referring to the weekly editorials in this paper on Ashland College Endowment, and still more encouraging has been the visible evidence of the fruits born of our efforts.